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first optical element and the second optical element
[members].

REMARKS

The claims now pending in the application are Claims 1 to 18. The independent claims being Claims 1, 11, 12 and 17. Claims 1 to 11 have been amended. Claims 12 to 18 have been cancelled.

In the Official Action dated March 3, 2000, Claims 1 and 11 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), as anticipated by Figure 1 and the disclosure at pages 2 to 5 of the present application (Applicants' "Admitted Prior Art"), and Claims 1 to 11 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), as unpatentable over Applicants' "Admitted Prior Art" in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,700,103 (Tsai). Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections respectfully are requested in view of the above amendments and the following remarks.

Without conceding the propriety of the rejections, Claims 1 to 11 have been amended more clearly to recite various novel features of the present invention, with particular attention to the Examiner's comments. Support for the proposed amendments may be found in the original application. No new matter has been added.

In each aspect (Claims 1 and 11), the claimed invention is directed to an optical-element holding mechanism including a coupling mechanism for securely coupling two holding members while accurately performing alignment of the optical axes of the two optical elements. As disclosed in greater detail in the present application, the novel arrangement of the urging member (spring washer 120) located between the coupling member (screw 145) and the second holding member (sixth lens unit holding frame 118), provides significant improvement over prior art coupling structures. Compare, Figure 3 with Figure 1.

Applicants submit that the prior art fails to anticipate the present invention. Moreover, Applicants submit that there are differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art, such that the subject matter taken as a whole would not have been obvious at the time the invention was made to one of ordinary skill in the art.

Figure 1 of the subject application discloses a system including a first lens tube 3, which holds a first lens 5, a second lens tube 6, which holds a second lens 7, and a coupling member (screw) 9. However, Applicants submit that the conventional structure illustrated in Figure 1 of

the subject application fails to disclose or suggest at least the above recited features of the present invention. Nowhere does the Figure 1 system disclose or suggest the use of an urging member located between a coupling member and the second holding member, as disclosed and claimed in the subject application. Rather, in Figure 1, a composite member 8 (including elements 8a, 8b, 8c), is disposed remote from the coupling member 9.

The Tsai '103 patent relates to a mounting structure, and discloses a mounting structure including a locking plate disposed between a mount and a frame structure. However, Applicants submit that the Tsai '103 patent fails to disclose or suggest at least the above-described features of the present invention. Nowhere does the Tsai '103 patent disclose or suggest alignment of the optical axes of two optical elements. Moreover, since the disclosure in Figure 1 of the present application relates to a structure in which the lens barrel or roller is in a deformed state, Applicants submit that the Tsai '103 patent fails to add anything to the disclosure of Figure 1 of the present application that would make obvious this feature.

For the above reasons, Applicants submit that independent Claims 1 and 11, are allowable over the cited art.

Claims 2 to 10 depend from Claim 1, and are believed allowable for the same reasons. Moreover, each of these dependent claims recites additional features in combination with the features of base Claim 1, and is believed allowable in its own right. Individual consideration of the dependent claims respectfully is requested.

Finally, Claims 12 to 18 have been cancelled herein pursuant to the restriction requirement. Applicants reserve all rights in the subject matter recited in cancel Claims 12 to 18, including the right to file one or more divisional applications directed thereto.

Applicants believe that the present Amendment is responsive to each of the points raised by the Examiner in the Official Action, and submit that the application is in allowable form. Favorable consideration of the claims and passage to issue of the present application at the Examiner's earliest convenience earnestly are solicited.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010.

All correspondence should continue to be directed to our
below listed address.

Respectfully submitted,


Attorney for Applicants

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